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CHRISTIAN COUNSEL

TO

THE SICK.

WITH A SELECTION OF

APPROPRIATE HYMNS.

By Rev. S. G. WINCHESTER,
Pastor of the Sixth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

"Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."
2 *Kings* xx. 1.

PHILADELPHIA:
WHETHAM AND D'HART, 22 SOUTH FOURTH STREET.
.....
1833.

TO

THE PEOPLE

OF MY BELOVED CHARGE,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY THEIR

AFFECTIONATE PASTOR,

THE AUTHOR.

(RECAP)

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PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH this little book was written with a special view to the instruction of the sick, in things which relate to their everlasting peace, and in the nature and necessity of a scriptural preparation for the eventful change that awaits them, yet the author believes it to be seasonable and appropriate "counsel" to all of every condition, whether in sickness or in health.

If, while in the enjoyment of vigour, and strength of body and mind, persons can be induced to make their peace with God, they will have secured for the remainder of their days, and especially for

their last moments, an advantage which cannot now be estimated, and a joy unspeakably precious. But in our instructions we must regard men as they are, and not as they ought to be, and adapt our counsel accordingly; if, therefore, they will defer the momentous work of repentance and reconciliation with God, to the day of sickness, pain, and death, sooner than let them perish without warning and instruction, we must meet them at the bedside with "Christian counsel" and exhortation. It is for this end that this little work has been prepared. Its want has been sensibly felt by those who can not, or will not, be faithful to sick and dying, yet impenitent, friends and relatives.

The design of this little book is ex-

pressed by calling it A PRESENT TO A SICK FRIEND. It is believed, that many, who have friends or acquaintances in ill health, would be pleased with the opportunity of presenting them with such "Christian counsel" as will be found in these pages; especially at a time, when it is reasonably to be supposed that their attention is most alive to the subject of which it treats. The brevity of the "counsel" will have considerable influence, in securing for it a perusal by those to whom it may be presented.

The importance and necessity of a small treatise, such as is now presented to the reader, are manifest from the fact, that the sick, generally, do not, and from the circumstances of the case, can not, receive, even from the best qualified and

most faithful clergymen and pious friends, that amount of appropriate and connected counsel, which their case requires. The most favourable moments for receiving instruction with profit, may occur, when those who are capable of imparting it, are not at hand. Many will read with great spiritual advantage, what they would be unwilling to receive from the lips of another. When they can not be prevailed upon to listen to religious conversation, they may not refuse to peruse, at leisure, or have read to them, all that a pious friend could wish to say. Those who nurse, and wait upon the sick, if they are unable to *give* instruction and advice, may be qualified to *read* it, with lasting benefit to themselves, as well as to the sick.

In regard to the great mass of our relatives and friends, we may, doubtless, adopt with much truth, the language of Flavel. "Few, yea, very few," says this pious writer, "are found furnished with wisdom, experience, and faithfulness, to give dying persons any considerable assistance in soul affairs. There may be found among the visitants of the sick, now and then, a person who hath a word of wisdom in his heart; but then either he wants opportunity, or courage and faithfulness to do the part of a true spiritual friend. Elihu describes the person so qualified as he ought to be, for this work, Job xxx. 23, 24, and calls him 'one among a thousand.' Some are too close and reserved, others too trifling and impertinent; some are willing, but want faithfulness; some cut too deep by un-

charitable censoriousness; others skin over the wound too slightly, speaking peace where God and conscience speak none; so that little help is to be expected." *Flavel's Works*, vol. iii. p. 100.

The author, desirous of being faithful to those for whose benefit he has prepared this little work, has aimed at simplicity and point, rather than ornament, or beauty of expression. And in the hope, and with the prayer, that it may effectually and extensively subserve the cause of Christian benevolence, and evangelical piety, he now commends it, and those who read it, to that Holy Spirit, without whose gracious influence, all "Christian counsel" will be ineffectual.

S. G. W.

Philadelphia, January 29th, 1833.

CHRISTIAN COUNSEL.

"Behold thy days approach that thou must die."
Deut. xxxi. 14.

CHAPTER I.

DEATH'S frequent visit to the circle of relatives and friends, and the solemn monition which it speaks in silent eloquence, from the slow procession, and the sable garments of surviving mourners, remind us of the solemn truth, that "man that is born of a woman is of few days."

Death is declared in Scripture to be "the wages of sin;" and the dissolution of the body is a part of that punishment announced in the declaration "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely

die." "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12.

All who have received an early religious education, and who have been brought up under the sound of the Gospel, and under the influence of a pious example, are doubtless conscious of being unprepared to die, if unregenerate, except they be infidels, or deceived as to their spiritual state. But the infidel himself must acknowledge, that it is the dictate of wisdom and of all sound philosophy, to prepare for any possible event, so momentous and eventful as the Scriptures represent death to be. Unless the impossibility of death, therefore, can be clearly demonstrated, the infidel is convicted of folly by his own principles, in remaining unprepared to meet it. Besides, if the infidel scheme be not demonstrably correct, it must be wholly false, for the issue

is too momentous to make a doubt on the dangerous side even tolerable. If the event should prove the infidel to be correct in his opinions, and the Bible in error on the subject of an hereafter, still the believer with his preparation for a future existence, will be as happy as the infidel. But should the event demonstrate the truth of Scripture, as it certainly will, can it still be said that the infidel is as happy as the believer?

If the reader be one who is deceived in regard to his spiritual state, and flatters himself with the belief that he is prepared to die, let me bespeak his careful perusal of what follows, showing wherein a preparation for death consists; so that he may judge of his state by what is shown to be indispensable from the nature of the case, as well as from the requirements of God. It is proper that he should be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him.

"What a wonder is it," says the learn-

ed and pious Halyburton, "that so grave and important a subject [as death] is so little in the thoughts of men! What apology can be made for the folly of mankind, who are at so much pains to shelter themselves against lesser inconveniences, quite overlooking this, which is of infinitely greater consequence. He is more than a madman who thinks that rational comfort in a dying hour, can be maintained upon dark, slender, and conjectural grounds. It is certain, that which must support, must be something on the *other side of time.* The one side of death affords nothing but matter of terror; if we are not enabled to look forward, and get such a sight of the other, as may balance it, we may reasonably say, that *it had been better for us never to have been born.*

"Undoubtedly, therefore, no question is so useful, so necessary, so noble, and truly worthy of the mind of man as this:

What shall become of me after death? What have I to look for, on the other side of that awful change?" *Halyburton's Inquiry.* Intro. p. 27.

In what, then, does a preparation for death consist? Is it mere courage in death? Is it a willingness to die, and to brave its consequences? Is it that state of desperate and hopeless resignation to which the mind has been wrought by fear and scepticism? Is it a silent indifference, which is sometimes gazetted as Christian resignation? Is it insensibility and ignorance of danger, which are sometimes called composure? No: the most hardened sinners have exhibited all this in a dying hour.

Is preparation for death the complete adjustment of all your worldly affairs? Is it the ability to leave behind you a competency for your children? Is it a religious education, or religious knowledge? Is it deep seriousness, or even

conviction of sin, and great alarm of conscience, and fear of hell? No, no: there are lost spirits of whom all this was true on their death beds. It becomes then a serious question, What is a preparation for death?

Death is a departure out of this world and an entrance into the next. The requisite preparation, therefore, is, strictly speaking, two-fold; namely, a preparation to leave this world, especially so much of it as has been committed to our care, and also a preparation to enter the next. The one is a preparation which relates to others, and may be called a temporal preparation, the other relates to our own souls, and may be termed a spiritual preparation.

I. First, and briefly, let me call your attention to the temporal preparation. It is every one's duty to be prepared, as far as practicable, to leave this world at

any moment. His worldly concerns should be so arranged as would effectually accomplish the great purpose, for which they were entrusted to him, if at any time he should be called away from their supervision. They should be in such a train as would secure the performance of every relative duty. And it is an important question which every man should ask himself in view of death, 'have I discharged every incumbent duty towards my country, my neighbour, my friends, my relatives, my children? Am I prepared to meet them at the judgment bar, and face them with a clear conscience?' If we have discharged every relative and Christian duty to those within the sphere of our influence, we are prepared to leave them. We shall certainly meet them in the world of spirits. The wicked too will meet in the world of despair, and the fact of their relationship in this life will enhance their misery.

All the recollections of the past will crowd upon the mind, and aggravate its suffering. Their neglect of relative duties; their unfaithfulness to each other in the matter of religion; their mutual encouragement in wickedness, and the countenance which each gave the other in the commission of sin, will fan the inextinguishable flame that preys upon the undying soul. The father will meet the son whom he taught to blaspheme, and by example or precept, to neglect religion and his God. Parents will meet the daughter whom they encouraged in wickedness, folly, and forgetfulness of religion. Children will rise up and curse the parents that gave them birth, and in the path of fashion and sin, led them on to death and perdition. "O there will be mourning at the judgment seat of Christ!"

But all this is not a preparation to enter into the eternal world of spirits. For

this, a spiritual preparation is necessary, to the nature and importance of which your solemn attention is requested.

II. Spiritual preparation is two-fold—namely, a preparation for the consequences of death, and a preparation of mind for the event itself; for many are prepared for all its consequences, whose minds are not prepared to encounter, with composure, the painful struggle of expiring nature, and to enter calmly and at once, upon a new and untried state of existence.

1. Let us then, in the first place, speak of a preparation for the consequences of death, which is the main subject of vast importance and engrossing interest to fallen, yet immortal man; and without which, all other preparation will be of no avail.

Death introduces us first to the judgment. "It is appointed unto men once

to die, but after this the judgment." Secondly, it introduces us to an eternal and spiritual state of being, where happiness is connected with, and dependent on, a capability of serving and enjoying God.

First. A preparation for the judgment is necessary. A preparation is necessary, because we can not escape the judgment; and because, in an unconverted state, we are not prepared for it. Jesus Christ is appointed to judge the world. He is God, and therefore omniscient, and incapable of error, either by condemning the justified, or clearing the guilty, which he has declared he will by no means do. He is holy, and therefore at an infinite remove from corruption and bribery, and criminal favouritism. He is just, and his judgment therefore will be righteous judgment, and according to truth. He is omnipotent, successful resistance is therefore impossible. The law of God is the rule of judgment, which is holy, just and

good; and all the attributes of God are pledged for its firm maintenance, and for the punishment of its transgressors. The subject matter to be judged, is your conduct in this life; for you will be judged "according to the deeds done in the body." Your words shall be judged. "I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Math. xii. 36. Even your secret thoughts must be subject to the scrutiny of this omniscient judge, for unto Him are the secrets of all hearts known. "The thought of foolishness is sin," Prov. xxiv. 9, and therefore to be judged. When God looked down upon the wickedness of man, and saw that it was great in the earth, he also saw that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5. "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." Prov. xv. 6. Because the

thoughts will be brought in judgment, the unrighteous man is exhorted to "forsake his thoughts." It was on this account also, that Peter, after reproving Simon Magus for his wickedness and folly, said to him, "Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Acts viii. 22.

The sentence pronounced by the judge in each case will be either, "well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord:" or "depart thou cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

In your present state, if not a penitent believer, you are wholly unprepared to stand this trial, or meet your judge in peace. You are at present in a perishing condition, for "he that believeth not, is

CONDEMNED ALREADY," John iii. 18. God is "angry with the wicked every day." "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked." You are designated in the Bible as condemned. You are now dealt with as condemned. The provision of a Saviour, and the offer of his pardon, declare your present state to be that of condemnation. And the urgent appeals, and tender expostulations of our Saviour, the prophets and apostles, declare it to be one also of extreme peril and necessity. The death of Jesus Christ was in execution of a sentence already pronounced against us, not of one yet to be determined upon and formed. We are by nature guilty sinners: transgressors of the law of God. We sinned in Adam in his first transgression, and fell with him. Rom. v. 12—20. We have committed actual sin, and have rejected the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ. Dear reader, how often, think you, has this crime of deepest hue, been

registered against you? When you stand at the bar of judgment, what plea can you offer in extenuation of your guilt? Will you mention the performance of duties in social life? In the first place, they are defective, as all human works are. Secondly, after the performance of all such duties, you are still "an unprofitable servant." Thirdly, the Bible no where teaches, that the performance of duty, attones for the commission of sin, otherwise there would have been no need of Christ. Our performance of duty, being imperfect, does not come up to the requirement, much less exceed it, so that the excess may go to atone for past transgressions. A perfect obedience is required, and an atonement for past sins in addition. Can you meet this requirement? The Bible answers, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Rom. iii. 20. There is a deficiency in the principle of obedience, for which you will be

condemned. God requires that the performance of duty shall spring from, and be the evidence of, love to Him: and not from a selfish motive and a self-righteous spirit. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." This passage at once determines the principle of your obedience; for if you are in a carnal, unconverted state, there is in your heart no love to God, but enmity against Him. All our duties and services of devotion, charity, honesty and industry, are called self-righteousness, because wrought out by ourselves, and this is compared in Scripture to "filthy rags," which can never justify us, and, if trusted to, will only deceive and confound us at the last day. To mention our good deeds, our intentions, or our endeavours, as a ground of pardon, is to produce a bond by which we are obligated to pay a thousand pounds, as evidence that we are not indebted. All that the self-righteous and the moralist look to, and hope in, for

pardon and acceptance, will rise up as swift witnesses against them in the day of righteous awards. Their very pleas for acceptance will be grounds of condemnation. Morality is commendable, but it is not religion. It will do, next to religion, for all the purposes of common intercourse with your fellow men, but it will not answer for a passport to heaven. It may do, in the absence of a better principle, to live by, but it will not do to die by. Morality without piety, is like a human body destitute of life. It is but the corpse. Piety is the life and soul that are absent.

When arraigned before the judgment bar, with no other plea than self-righteousness and morality, you will be speechless, as was the man who had not on the wedding garment. You must be condemned and driven from the presence of God and the glory of his power. You will have no advocate to defend you or

plead your cause. Power, wealth, and influence, will then be of no avail, except to enhance your criminality, by adding to it the guilt of misimproved gifts and neglected talents. You will be surrounded by a host of witnesses, whose testimony will be against you, and whose credibility can not be impeached nor questioned. The guilty chamber, the insulted moon, the midnight torch, and even darkness itself, will give in their evidence of witnessed crime. The Bible, the sanctuary, the closet, and a guilty conscience, will testify to neglects, abuses and transgressions, till you sink, self-condemned, into despair and endless misery. You are not prepared for judgment, as you have no prevailing plea to offer as a ground of pardon. Your perishing necessity, your entire helplessness, are all true items in the history of your case, but are not available pleas in a court of holiness and justice. They

may excite compassion, and move to pity, but cannot sheathe the sword of avenging justice. But there is a prevalent plea. It is the righteousness of Christ, wrought out by his perfect obedience, and his vicarious sufferings and death. His obedience was rendered to the law of God which you had transgressed, and for which transgression you are condemned. His sufferings and death were in the room and stead of the sinner. He, as the substitute of the sinner, suffered the punishment due to sin, by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, thus bearing our iniquity. This obedience and suffering is a full satisfaction of the claims of divine justice. It is therefore called a righteousness. This righteousness of Christ is imputed or set over to the believer's account, and received by faith. Faith on your part, is the means by which you receive, and become interested in, the righteousness of Christ. It

is therefore essential to a preparation for the judgment. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Faith makes Christ's righteousness your righteousness. It is a reliance on it, and a trusting to it, for acceptance with God. It is believing that on account of that righteousness, God will freely pardon all your sins, and graciously accept you in the Beloved. God will regard this righteousness as yours, and treat you accordingly. Faith furnishes you with this plea at the judgment bar. 'Jesus died for me. His righteousness is freely made over to me, and, by divine grace, I accept it as mine, and now offer it as my plea, on the ground of which I expect the pardon of all my sins, and free and full admittance into heaven.'

Faith receives Christ in all his offices;

as a prophet to instruct us; as a priest to atone and intercede for us; and as a king to rule over, and reign in us. By whose teachings we grow in the knowledge of spiritual things, to whose atonement and intercession we cordially and entirely trust, and to whose commands and precepts we strive, by his grace assisting us, to render a new and acceptable obedience. This is justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ.

"Repentance towards God," is essential to the preparation of which we speak, as well as "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin, and a turning away from the love and practice of it.

Sin is to be hated, not so much on account of its consequences, as its nature. It is sin against a holy God. None hate sin more cordially, and none practice it less, than those who are assured that they

shall never suffer its punishment. Repentance is a hatred of sin for its own sake. "Repent therefore and be converted." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Reader! if you have this faith and this repentance, you are prepared for the judgment.

But *secondly*, death introduces us into a spiritual and eternal state of existence, where our happiness depends upon the moral character and state of heart with which we enter into it. Holiness of heart is a requisite preparation for death, as well as justification. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." By nature we are unholy, and our hearts depraved, "having an evil heart of unbelief." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and blinded by sin; and therefore "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because

they are spiritually discerned." This depravity has descended to us from our first parents. We are conceived in sin, and born in iniquity. All who are born by ordinary generation are thus tainted. Jesus Christ was born of an extraordinary and miraculous conception, so that his human nature, thus conceived, escaped the pollution which the race has inherited. The apostle Paul, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans, (v. 10—18) quoting from the 14th and 53d Psalms, describes the human heart in an unconverted state thus: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are

swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes."

The unregenerate soul is incapable of loving God, or of serving Him acceptably, or of enjoying his presence. As God is the exclusive source of all happiness, and as He can not be enjoyed but by loving and serving Him supremely and acceptably, it follows, as a matter of consequence, that an unchanged, unconverted soul, dying such, must be miserable for ever.

Heaven is a holy place, filled with holy beings, engaged in holy employments, serving, loving and enjoying a holy God. Nothing defiled, or unholy can enter heaven, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But the human soul is unholy. It is averse to holiness, whether of place, employment, or being. Even in this world, the subject of religion, when introduced as a topic of conversation or

instruction, is regarded as an unwelcome intruder. And the humble pious are not those whom the world selects as companions and instructors; thus showing that religion and religious persons are not congenial to its taste and disposition.

In an unconverted state you are incapable of deriving happiness from holiness, and yet this is the only happiness that is suited to a rational and immortal mind. It is the only happiness that can satisfy, or be enjoyed by, such a mind. Without an entire and radical change of heart, therefore you are not prepared to die. You are not prepared to be happy in that spiritual world whither time is speeding you, and where death will soon conduct you.

You may be amiable and lovely, and kind and dutiful to all with whom you have intercourse here, but these are not gracious affections. You may be all this, and yet "be in the gall of bitterness and

the bond of iniquity." Indeed the loveliness of your character but makes your history the more melancholy. You have been amiable, affectionate, kind and dutiful to all but God, whom you are under the highest obligations to love and serve. But your Creator and Saviour you have neglected and forgotten. If you have every other good quality, and yet lack "the one thing needful," you are not prepared to die. The affections of your heart may be entwined around the friends of your bosom, and yet estranged from God. You may be the object of much earthly love and esteem, and yet the wrath of God may abide upon you, and He be angry with you every day.

What, then, is the requisite preparation for that state of being to which you are introduced by death? It is necessary that you have a new and purified heart; a heart that will love God as well as man; a heart that seeks and finds its highest

happiness in God, and in the holiness of his character and service. This great change is effected by the Holy Ghost in the *new birth* spoken of by our Saviour, in his conversation with Nicodemus, "except a man be born again (or from above,) he can not see the kingdom of God." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. 5. This new birth is elsewhere called a new creation, "For we are his workmanship; created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Eph. ii. 10. "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. iv. 24. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." 2 Cor. v. 17.

This regeneration or conversion, which is the beginning of holiness in the heart, is shown by a reflection of that holiness in the life and conversation. It produces

a love for holiness, and a hatred to sin. Excites a longing desire after entire conformity to the will of God, a panting after his Spirit, his favour, and his loving-kindness. It also excites a desire to depart, and be for ever with the Lord; and yet it makes us willing to remain during our appointed days, to perform the work assigned us by our Lord and Master.

This new birth is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. To God therefore you must look for it. He has promised to give it. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Let your prayer then be, "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit." Psalm li. 10. If David felt the necessity of "a clean heart" and a "right spirit," you may safely conclude that you are as sinful and needy as he was.

Justification, then, is a preparation for

the judgment, and regeneration for the heavenly state. The two, therefore, constitute a preparation for all the consequences of death.

Justification and regeneration, though distinct in their nature, the one being an external act, changing our relation to God; the other an internal work, changing the heart; are, notwithstanding, never separated in the preparation of a soul for death. In the economy of God's grace the one invariably accompanies the other.

You have now a brief exposition of the nature and necessity of a preparation for the consequences of death. Dear reader! are you thus prepared?

2. The second branch of a spiritual preparation for death, regards simply the event itself, and not its consequences. It is a preparation of mind, and nerve, and feeling for the article of death. To this subject your attention may now be profitably directed, provided you are ready for death in every other point of view.

Death can be fully known only by experiencing it: as yet it is to us new and unknown. Regarded simply as the separation of the soul and body, it is an event from which the mind instinctively revolts. We are naturally timid, and dread the pain of dying. It is the separation of friends, and the breaking up of many and tender ties. Between the truly pious, the separation is indeed but a temporary one. Those who survive, may confidently look forward to a happy meeting, to part no more forever. Those who go before us, leave us with the hope of soon welcoming us to mansions above, and to the enjoyment of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

But the great, the everlasting separation which death effects, is between the righteous and the wicked; "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Those who have long lived together in love and

intimacy must part forever. Those who have dwelt under the same roof, sat at the same table, and reposed upon the same pillow, must bid a long, long, long, farewell. But for divine grace, the believer's departing spirit could not endure the trial of leaving beloved relatives and friends unreconciled to God, exposed to his wrath and under the dominion of sin.

For this, and for every other circumstance connected with the article of death, the mind should be prepared; and this cannot be done except by much meditation, watchfulness, and prayer.

One of the early Christian fathers makes a preparation for death, one of the rules which he has given for the conduct of life; and he makes this preparation to consist mainly in a full and practical belief of the certainty of death, a prayerful watchfulness against being surprised by it, and that familiar acquaintance with it, which consists in a daily dying to this

world, with the full assurance of entering upon a better world beyond the grave.

A preparation of mind for leaving behind us ungodly relatives and friends, consists in an ardent love for their souls, and a fervent desire, that they may be saved; together with, and governed by, a full persuasion that they, as much as others deserve to perish; that they are in the hands of a merciful God, and that He will do that which is right. It consists also in the exercise of such an unbounded love to God, and desire for his glory, as to swallow up every inferior consideration.

There are certain rules clearly laid down in Scripture, for making preparation for the eventful hour of death.

1. Purify yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. In 2 Cor. vii. 1, the apostle says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear

of God." We are, as yet, but partially sanctified. And our remaining depravity is that ground work on which Satan operates to our prejudice; tempting us to doubt the faithfulness of God, the certainty of heaven, and even the reality of spiritual things. But the more holy and purified we are, the less subject will we be to those harrassing doubts and fears of death.

2. Have your mind constantly filled with believing views of the invisible world. We have great courage "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. iv. 18. While in the flesh, it is impossible to have adequate conceptions of the glory that fills the upper world; but by having our thoughts much engaged in the contemplation of heaven, and having our minds absorbed in the repre-

sentations which the Scriptures give of the saints, and in the anticipation of the happiness reserved for them, we forget this world, and the momentary struggle with which we shall leave it. The difficulties, the dangers, and the pains of that short passage which conducts to the place which has occupied so intensely and delightfully, our daily and nightly meditations, seem to diminish as we approach them.

3. "Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter i. 10. With the assurance of hope, we are ready to die, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. v. 1. "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." 2 Cor. iv. 14. With such an assurance

you may face death with composure, yea, with triumphant feelings. "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

4. Seek and obtain that state of mind which prompted Job to say "I would not live alway." Job, vii. 16. Which prompted the apostle to say, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain." Phil. i. 21. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." 2 Cor. v. 8. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Phil. i. 23. With such a strong desire to be freed from the sins, and the temptations, and the spiritual privations of this life, death can have no terror, but is welcomed as a friendly messenger to bear you to the skies, and to the bosom of your Saviour.

5. Wean your hearts from this world; always look upon earthly things in the

light of divine truth, and of eternity. "Count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Phil. iii. 8. To make the sweets of this world tasteless and insipid, you should feast your soul on the loveliness and preciousness of Christ. When you take upon you the yoke of Christ, you will be weary of the yoke of sin. When you look steadily by faith into the invisible world, this world in which you live gradually loses its charms for you.

To die daily to the world, is a Christian's duty, and it is a Christian's interest, for when death comes, it will be no stranger. You have been daily cultivating its acquaintance. "Death is swallowed up in victory," and therefore not to be feared. "Death is yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. iii. 22. Death, therefore, is not only conquered, but taken captive. Being

weaned from this world, you are prepared for the next.

O what a change does the believer experience at death! Now in the body, conversing with men, and living among sensible objects, and in a few moments, he is in the world of spirits. One hour in this world, just as we now are, and the next in the third heaven, with angels and the spirits of the just made perfect. O what a blessedness, to be lifted from a bed of sickness and pain, to a throne of glory. To leave a sinful world and a suffering body, and in a moment enter a holy, happy world, and to be freed from pain and care and sorrow. Heaven is the believer's rest, and dying is but going home. This world is a sea of trouble. Heaven is a place of unalloyed happiness and perpetual repose. Believers there "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the

midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. vii. 16, 17.

You have now before you the nature of that preparation of mind, for the article of death, which is requisite in order to meet it, as becomes the heir of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and also the rules by which that preparation may be made.

It is injurious to the influence of religion, when believers discover great alarm at the approach of death. It destroys the confidence of the world in the power of religion, and tends to weaken the faith of young disciples. It should be one great end of a Christian's life, so to meet death, as to convince the gain-saying and the ungodly, that "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," and that true religion disarms death of his sting, and dis-

robes him of his terrors, and thus extort from them the prayer of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his." Num. xxiii. 10.

CHAPTER II.

"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." *Heb.* iii. 15.

As to the time when a preparation for death should be made, Scripture and reason are explicit: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." In health, prepare for sickness. In life, prepare for death.

Perhaps you dislike to think of death, because it is to you a gloomy subject, and one from the contemplation of which, you can derive no pleasure. Because death

is marked with sadness and melancholy, and fraught with dangers to an unprepared soul, you drive it from your mind and refuse to meditate upon it. But this is the very reason why you should think of it. If you were under the necessity of travelling a dark and narrow path, beset with difficulties and dangers, would you, on that account, refuse to think of it, and choose to travel it blindfold, that you might not see its dangers? You dread surprise at death. A timely preparation will relieve you from the horror of such a surprise. "Be ye always ready," and death, though sudden and unexpected, can not harm you. But by putting far off the evil day, driving it from your thoughts, and deferring a preparation, you render surprise both painful and inevitable. Court familiarity with death. Bring in imagination the scene of your own dissolution before your mind. Fancy yourself just on the verge of eternity,

this world receding from your view, all things around becoming indistinct, light itself turning pale and fast fading away, the sobs and cries of weeping friends, faintly falling on the ear, and becoming less and less audible, the light of eternity just bursting on your soul, now wafted to the world of spirits. What if you are then unprepared! without a Saviour! without a hope! O let me persuade you now to prepare while you are blest with abundant means of grace, and such a favourable opportunity.

A preparation deliberately deferred to your last moments, is at best suspicious as to its genuineness. A changed life is the scriptural evidence of a changed heart; but death-bed penitents have no opportunity for applying this test to their own supposed conversion. How hard is it for such to discover their sincerity, and how uncomfortable must it be to die, without

this trial of our faith. But all things are possible with God.

"We may consider," says Barrow, "that no future time which we may fix on, will be more convenient than the present is for our reformation. Let us pitch on what time we please, we shall be as unwilling and as unfit to begin as we are now; we shall find in ourselves the same indisposition, the same averseness, or the same listlessness toward it, as now. There will occur the like hardships to deter us, and the like pleasures to allure us, from our duty: objects will then be as present, and will strike as smartly on our senses; the case will appear just the same, and the same pretences for delay will obtrude themselves: so that we shall be as apt then as now to prorogue the business. We shall then say, to-morrow I will mend; and when that to-morrow cometh, it will be still to-morrow, and so the morrow will prove endless. If, like the sim-

ple rustic, who staid by the river side waiting till it had done running, so that he might pass dry-foot over the channel, we do conceit that the sources of sin, (bad inclinations within, and strong temptations abroad,) will of themselves be spent, or fail, we shall find ourselves deluded." *Barrow's Works*, vol. iii. p. 243, Hughes' ed.

If you are not now on your death bed, or in the last stages of your disease, I conjure you by all the solemnity of death, by the value of your soul, and the fearfulness of its destruction, not to defer the work of preparation to any future period. It is no time to repent of sin, to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be reconciled to God, when your body is racked with pains, and your mind wandering in delirium. You will have enough to do to grapple with your agonies, your burning fevers, and your decaying strength. How often is the pa-

tient overcome with irresistible stupor, or labouring under a partial derangement of mind, at the very time he intended to prepare for eternity! O what a situation! to be entering the world of spirits with the consciousness of unpardoned guilt! To see hell move to receive your horror-stricken spirit, as in despair it rushes from its decayed tenement, and to feel upon its vitals, even before it has quite left its clay, the knawings of the worm that never dies, and the burnings of that fire that is never quenched!

Hear what Flavel would say to us on this subject: "Time is exceeding precious with dying men; the last sand is ready to fall, and therefore not to be wasted, as it is wont to be. When we had a fair prospect of many years before us, we made little account of an hour or a day; but now one of those hours which we so carelessly lavished away, is of more value than all this world to us, especially if the

whole weight of eternity should hang upon it, (as oftentimes it doth) then the loss of that portion of time, is the loss of soul, body, and hope forever more.

"The business and employment of dying persons is of so vast importance and weight, that every moment of their time needs to be carefully saved, and applied to this, their present and most important concern. How well soever you have improved the time of life, believe it, you will find work enough upon your hands at death: dying hours will be found to be labourious hours, even to the most painful, serious, and industrious souls, whose life has been mostly spent in preparations for death. Leave not the proper business of other days to that day; for that day will have business enough of its own. Sufficient for that day are the labours thereof.

"It is rarely found, that a dying man can pursue a serious meditation with calm

and fixed thoughts: for besides the pains and faintings of the body, the abilities of the mind usually fail. Here also they fall into a sad dilemma; if they do not with the utmost intention of mind, fix their hearts and thoughts on Christ, they lose their comforts, if godly, and their souls, if ungodly; and if they do thus fix their hearts and thoughts, friends and physicians assure them they will destroy their bodies; these are the straits of men bordering close upon eternity." *Flavel's Works*, vol. iii. p. 99.

What is related of Alcæus the poet, is applicable to the subject before us. He is said to have derived from each season of the year, fresh arguments for indulging in intemperance. The spring, said he, requires liberal drinking in token of joy for the renovation of nature; the summer, to invigorate the body and mind, labouring under the weakening effects of lassitude and excessive heat, and to arouse

us from langour, and to quench the thirst; it was due to autumn which is dedicated to the vintage, as a rejoicing in the abundance of fruits: and the winter required it to expel the cold that would otherwise congeal the blood and spirits.

And so men, in the several ages of life, frame some excuses to delay repentance from period to period. They think the vanities of childhood, and its attendant immaturity of judgment, the pleasures and sprightliness of youth, the business and cares of middle age, and the infirmity of old age, are plausible pretences for putting off this serious and important work. O that such would duly consider the awful uncertainty upon which they build their hopes of future repentance and acceptance with God!

In putting off this necessary preparation, if you could also defer the stroke of death, your conduct might find some apology in worldly policy, but none in

gratitude or heavenly wisdom. But while you are pushing preparation far into the future, death is hastening on the wings of time. You may fix upon a day for turning to God, which you may never see. You may die before the siring and setting of another sun. The very effort you make to defer repentance, increases the necessity of repenting *now*. While you are determining on a period for repentance, death is swiftly coming. While you are endeavouring to forget him, he is speeding his car of destruction. Why, then, will you be deceived by the tempter, and yield to his cruel suggestions? Are you willing to select the healthiest man in the circle of your acquaintance, and risk your salvation on the condition, that he lives to the day you have fixed on for repentance? And will you, unhesitatingly, risk the same prize on the condition that you live so long yourself? Do you take encouragement to delay, from the history

of the thief on the cross? If duly considered, its proper effect should be to deter you from it. The present is not such a time as that, when the thief was pardoned. Your circumstances are far different from his. If Jesus Christ should come again, and die for the sins of men, and you, as a thief, be crucified by his side, there would be in your case, the possibility of hope. The case of the pardoned thief was an extreme one. It was an extreme hour, and for extreme purposes. It was to show, that Christ had the power to pardon, when that power was most doubted. It was to show, that Jesus was still victorious, though hell seemed to triumph. And it may be classed with the darkening of the heavens, the rending of the rocks, the opening of the graves, and the miraculous parting of the veil in the temple. Are you willing to depend on the recurrence of this scene, with its attendant circumstan-

ces, for a fate similar to that of the thief? Because the plague has swept ten thousand victims from the earth, where it has spared a remnant to tell the tale of wo, will you choose to throw yourself in the jaws of the pestilence, with the hope of escaping? Because the single instance stands recorded, of a man having been convicted of sin while witnessing a theatrical performance, will you choose to seek a new heart and the pardon of your sins, by visiting the haunts of profligacy and crime? Because a death bed repentance is just within the circumference of possibility, will you choose to risk upon it your highest, your immortal interests? Will you, in the exercise of reason, in the view of all experience, and in the light of divine truth, deliberately suspend your salvation upon the extreme point of bare possibility?

The celebrated Dr. Lightfoot, in his sermon on the case of the penitent thief,

makes the following just remarks: "Monuments of mercy were never set up in Scripture to be encouragements of presumption; and examples of pardon never recorded to state the rate and price of pardon.

"David's conclusion is, 'There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' But God never showed mercy, that he might be made the more bold withal and the less feared. And the inference he makes upon the pardon of his sin, is this: 'I acknowledge my sin, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' What use is here for others to make of that example? 'For this, shall every man that is godly, make his prayer in time, when thou mayest be found': and not put it off to what time he himself shall find, he knows not when.

"The *providence* of God, was never the rule for men to go by, but his *word*. It were not good sense to say, that God's

extraordinary actings should be men's ordinary rule. He that would not plough nor sow, but expect bread to be rained for him from heaven, because God once rained manna upon Israel, may sit and starve: and he that will look for ravens to bring him bread and flesh, morning and evening, because they did once so to Elias, may walk with a hungry belly, but he will never be fed.

"The mercies of God are never recorded in Scripture for man's presumption, and the failings of men never for imitation. Here is the memorial of a singular *mercy* of God, in saving this sinner: and a *failing* of this man that he never sought salvation till this very instant.

"For the stating of the sure grounds, whereupon a man may comfortably hope and expect pardon and salvation at the hands of God, it were a mad doing, to lay for the two corner stones, in such a build-

ing, 'presumption upon mercy,' and 'delaying of repentance.' This is worse than building upon impiety.

"Now, the word of God, which is to be our rule, tells us these two things:—

"1. That repentance is the gift of God, as well as pardon. It is he, that 'pours out the Spirit of grace and supplication.' Zech. xii. 10. 'Him God hath exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.' Acts v. 31. Therefore, that man takes the interest of God and Christ out of their hands, that presumes he shall give himself repentance; and that, when he pleaseth. Can such a man give himself life, when God will not give it? health, when God will not give it? and can he give himself repentance, when God will not give it?—They, in the apostle James, that say, 'To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such or such a

city,' &c. are justly confuted, by the uncertainty of their life; that can so little maintain it, that cannot tell how long or little it shall be maintained. So those that promise to themselves repentance the next year, or the other,—besides, that they cannot promise to themselves to live to such a time; and if they do, can they any more give themselves repentance then, than they can now? Or can they presume, God will give them repentance then, any more than now? I remember that passage of the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 25. 'If, peradventure, God will give them repentance.' If the apostle put it to a *peradventure*, whether God will give them repentance,—I dare say it is past all *peradventure*, they cannot give it themselves.

"It is God that gives repentance, as well as he gives pardon. For he, and he only, is the giver of all grace: and repen-

tance is the gift of sanctifying grace, as pardon is of justifying.

"2. He hath set conditions, upon which to give repentance: a rule whereby to come to pardon. And his rule is, 'Take God's time, as well as take God's way.' His way is to attend upon his word, that calls for repentance; to cast away every thing, that may hinder repentance. So his time is, 'Betake to repentance, when God calls for repentance.' And that is this day,—this very hour,—every day,—every hour. We hear of 'to day,' and 'while it is called to-day,' in the claiming of man's duty; but we never hear of 'to-morrow,' or the next day,—much less of the next month, or next year,—or I know not how long to come."—*Lightfoot's Works*, vol. vii. p. 277—280, Pitman's ed.

Every delay is dangerous in the same proportion. It provokes the anger of God, grieves his Holy Spirit, and by

hardening the heart, and rendering it less susceptible of serious impression, you hourly lessen the probability of your salvation. There is doubtless a period, even in life, beyond which, if preparation be deferred, it never will be made. The time between the present, and that eventful, decisive period, is called *the day of grace*, the day of salvation—the accepted time—the day of visitation. And what adds a still more awful interest to that period, is the fact, that we are wholly unconscious of its arrival. We do not hear that mild voice of direful import, "let him alone, he is joined to his idols." Words more terrible than the thunders of Sinai could utter. It is the still, calm, settled decision of Deity clothed in vengeance. It is the pouring out of the "wrath of the Lamb." God declares, "my Spirit shall not always strive with man." And when it ceases, it is followed by the calm of spiritual death, no more

to be disturbed by the movings of that Spirit, but by the sound of the archangel's trumpet. God calls for immediate repentance, and to an immediate acceptance of his mercy in Jesus Christ, by faith. If you will delay, listen to the voice of your insulted and offended God, who *would* be your friend and Saviour, "but *ye will* not."

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord:

they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." Prov. i. 24—31.

CHAPTER III.

"Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."
Deut. xxxii. 29.

LET me now advert to those considerations, which should operate as motives to a speedy and genuine preparation for death.

1. *The certainty of death* is a motive to prepare for it. "It is appointed unto men once to die." "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Ps. lxxxix. 48. "There is no man that hath power of the spirit, to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in

the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war." Eccles. viii. 8. Death has already been introduced by sin; and it is the wages of sin. The doctrines, precepts, and exhortations of the Bible all teach directly or indirectly, that man is mortal and will certainly die. The seeds of dissolution are planted in his bosom. Amid all the controversies of the world and the Church, the certainty of death stands unquestioned. Its truth is established by divine revelation, and by the recorded experience of mankind for more than five thousand years. The instances of translation mentioned in the Scriptures, being wholly miraculous, are only such exceptions as strengthen the general rule. In the case of impenitent men, the justice of God puts the certainty of death beyond question, as it stands pledged to execute the sentence, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," which includes temporal as well as spiritual death. Be

deeply impressed with the truth, *you must die.* That body which you now guard and adorn, must ere long be laid beneath the cold sod, and become the food of worms: and that spirit which animates it, stand before its Maker and its Judge, either covered with guilt and pollution, or arrayed in the white robe of the Redeemer's righteousness.

Although mankind fear death, and may be alarmed at any indications of its approach, yet they are commonly not persuaded in a practical way, of its certainty to themselves. Or if they are so far persuaded, as to settle their temporal affairs in the view of it, yet there is, in most cases, a practical scepticism as to the event, and a strange indifference to its consequences, which hinder them from living in view of it; and from being distinctly impressed with the necessity of a spiritual preparation: for most men live as if they were never to die.

Although we often think, or at least fear, that death is very near our dear relatives and friends, and often discover much solicitude on account of it; yet by a thousand illusions we are led to make exceptions from this danger, in favour of ourselves.

The tempter may not persuade you, that you shall never die. This would be too gross an error to effect deception, as it contradicts revelation, all experience, and facts with which you are daily familiar. The false assertion, "ye shall not surely die," did indeed prevail with our first parents, in seducing them from truth and holiness, but it was in the absence of all history and observation to contradict it. There was indeed a naked threat to the contrary, but it was as yet unexecuted. But, "the wisdom of the serpent" teaches him that the fallacy of such a declaration would be now too glaring, since the generations of Adam down to the last, are

silent yet faithful witnesses to prove the certainty of death, and to suggest the inquiry, "Our fathers, where are they?" No, the cunning and artful adversary of your soul, will not say that you shall *never* die, but he would persuade you that you will not die to day, nor to-morrow, nor for a long time to come. But be not deceived. You must soon die.

2. Consider the *uncertainty of death.* It was a Latin maxim of the old Civilians, that "although nothing was more certain than the fact of death, yet nothing was more uncertain than the time of it." This uncertainty relates not simply to place and manner, but to time also, yea, may I not add, *to your state of heart.* It is uncertain when you will die, and it is uncertain, if now unprepared, whether you will die in peace with God or not. But the event will decide these doubts. Can you remain at ease, and have a tranquil mind during this uncertainty? Will

you thoughtlessly permit the issue to decide the doubtful question? Yea, rather will you carelessly meet it, as if it decided nothing of importance?

The Scriptures declare that ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. It is said that he will come at an hour when you look not for him. The bridegroom cometh at midnight. This night thy soul may be required of thee. Hence the exhortation "be ye always ready." "Prepare to meet thy God." "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." James iv. 13. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Prov. xxvii. 1.

Our bodily constitution, and the circumstances in which we are placed, continually expose us to fatal accidents. Ac-

cidents the most unlikely have hurried, unprepared and unwarned, souls into eternity. The air we breathe, the myriads of unseen atoms that float upon it, the food we eat, and the water we drink, may minister unexpected death. There are a thousand unguarded avenues through which death may reach the vitals, and take us by surprise. You have escaped it to day, but are you assured you will escape to-morrow? There is no situation in which you can be placed, where you are not exposed to death, and where others have not met it.

"There is no action of renown," says the eloquent Massillon, "which may not be terminated by the eternal darkness of the grave: Herod was cut off in the midst of the foolish applause of his people. No public day which may not finish with your funeral pomp: Jezebel was thrown headlong from the window of her palace, the very day she had chosen to

show herself with unusual ostentation. No delicious feast which may not bring death to you: Belshazzar lost his life when seated at a sumptuous banquet. No sleep which may not be to you the sleep of death: Holofernes, in the midst of his army, a conqueror of kingdoms and provinces, lost his life by an Israelitish woman, when asleep in his tent. No crime which may not finish your crimes: Zimri found an infamous death in the tents of the daughters of Midian. No sickness which may not terminate your days: you very often see the slightest infirmities resist all applications of the healing art, deceive the expectations of the sick, and suddenly turn to death. In a word, imagine yourself in any circumstances of life, wherein you may ever be placed, and you will hardly be able to reckon the number of those who have been surprised by death when in like circumstances: and you have no warrant that you

will not meet with the same fate. You acknowledge this. You own it to be true, but perhaps this avowal, so terrible in itself, is only an acknowledgment which caution demands of you, but which never leads you to a single precaution to guard against the danger."

Sudden death is not uncommon. Our ears have become almost familiarized to the intelligence of such occurrences, and yet our hearts, for the most part, remain unaffected and uninfluenced. Brief and fatal sickness is still more common. It not unfrequently is the case, that one week witnesses the gay and lively intercourse of friends, and the next finds them surrounding the grave of one of the number. Frequently do we hear the lamentation, "How sudden, how unexpected! How afflicting the circumstance! How inscrutable are the ways of providence!" And yet those who may thus lament, may be living as if it were wholly impossible for a

similar lamentation, to be made over them the very next hour. For men commonly think that they are in no danger when they see none.

Youth is no security against death. His broad commission covers every age and every condition: and the graves of every size, that answers to the human frame, proclaim, in silent demonstration, that life is precarious, and death uncertain. There is no size, no age, and no condition common to man, for which the grave has not been opened. Wealth can not purchase death's delay. Distinction, power, and grandeur can not deter him from his purpose. Neither can the poor and the obscure escape his notice. All experience as well as Scripture, prove the uncertainty of death.

In regard to the impenitent, this is particularly true. It is expressly declared that sudden destruction shall come upon the wicked: "For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruc-

tion cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." 1 Thess. v. 3. "He that being often reproved, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Prov. xxix. 1. These declarations of Holy Writ are strikingly fulfilled in the history of every finally impenitent sinner's death. Although the patient may be gradually sinking into the grave, by a wasting consumption, and although his family and friends, where excessive tenderness has not blinded them, or the mistaken kindness of the physician deluded them, see the hand of death upon him, and are persuaded he is dying, yet he is the last to believe it. He clings to the hope of life, while life, with its last dying strength, clings to his frail body; and at last sinks with surprise in death. How often is this verified! And yet, with what singular tenacity will those in similar circumstances, cling to

the belief, that they will recover, or linger yet a long time to come. O how many, though long warned by a protracted sickness, and by the words and actions of those around them, O how many, are surprised at last, and die unexpectedly to themselves!

But even this uncertainty in death seems often to render men inattentive and careless. Which shows how Satan perverts the proper influence of circumstances, which should operate as motives to wise precaution and diligent preparation. And which shows too, how ready we are to yield to temptation, and to be influenced by suggestions the most unreasonable and destructive.

The uncertainty of death is, surely, a motive to watchfulness and caution, but the bait that deceives us, is the gloss put upon it, that as it is uncertain, it may be very distant. This converts anxiety on this subject into a vague emotion, and

hinders the mind from seizing on the idea of present exposedness, with an abiding and vivid impression of the real danger in which we hourly live. Because death, from its uncertainty, *may be distant*, it is the practical persuasion of men that *it is so*. With a solicitude, therefore, inexpressible by language, I would persuade you to prepare for an event so uncertain, and by which you are so liable to be surprised. Be always in that situation in which you would be willing to be found by death.

3. Consider the fact, that *death is rapidly approaching*, and you must very soon experience it.

The first step you take is towards the grave; and so is every succeeding one. While you are locked in sleep, the pale messenger is hastening with the fleetness of time. When you awake in the morning, remember what progress he has made since you closed your eyes in si-

lent forgetfulness. Every sentence you read in this little book finds you nearer the grave than the one which preceded it. It is, therefore, with an accumulative earnestness and importunity, with which each would address you on this momentous subject. Each setting sun, as he sinks beneath the horizon, should impressively remind you of your approaching end. And when he rises in the morning, it is not only to bless you with his light and warmth, but also with the instructive lesson, if you will but heed it, that since you last beheld his brightness, you have made amazing progress towards the darkness of the grave. O let the works of God, as well as his word and providence, admonish you that you soon must die. In the midst of life you are in death. To some unprepared and unsuspecting heart, the arrow of death may now be pointed with fatal certainty, and is stayed only by the sove-

reign hand of God, whose forbearance would yet prolong, hour by hour, his space for repentance, while at the same time he is calling him to turn from his wickedness, and prepare to die. Dear reader, is it to your heart that this arrow is now directed? Does God call you to repentance while he thus spares your life? Will you turn to God, or shall the patience of God be exhausted, and the arrow of death be made drunk with your blood? "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" is his earnest, and affectionate expostulation.

How rapidly time hastes away! It steals by us almost unnoticed. When from the point to which you have now arrived, you look back upon the years you have already numbered, the past is like a dream, and your days as a tale that is told. It seems as if but yesterday you were children, and busily engaged in all the sports of thought-

less childhood. Perhaps you have now emerged from the years of dependence and restraint. It may be, you are burdened with the cares of business, and surrounded by another and rising generation. But in this retrospect, painful recollections crowd upon the mind, and weigh heavily upon the heart. Where are the companions of your boyhood? and even of your riper years? Many of them have departed, and entered the world of spirits, whither you are soon to follow them. Their familiar forms rise up before you, with tender and distinct impression, and the big, unbidden tear, starts at memory's touch. They once were in health, and in the vigour of life, and dreamed of the future, with far greater probability of realizing it, than you now do, but the days to which they looked forward, they were never permitted to behold. Some, whose eyes these unpretending pages may meet, perhaps now stand

alone in the world, like the venerable and stately oak, after the desolating hurricane, has laid waste the surrounding forest. You have lived to bury your generation, and to witness the rising of another. Death can not be far from you. The days of a man are three score years and ten. Your hoary head must soon be laid in the tomb. Are you prepared to die?

> Eternity is just at hand;
> And shall I waste my ebbing sand?
> And careless view departing day,
> And throw my inch of time away?

4. As the last motive I shall mention, to a timely preparation for death, consider the fact, *that you will die but once.* "It is appointed unto men ONCE to die." At death your eternal doom is fixed. Death is the decisive moment: and in that moment is recorded the history of your eternity.

There are no acts of pardon past
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there.

Then, what my thoughts design to do,
My hands, with all your might pursue;
Since no device nor work is found,
Nor faith nor hope beneath the ground.

"In the place where the tree falleth there it shall be." "He that is unjust let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." This is the declaration which the angel made to John, in his apocalyptic vision, when he said that "the time is at hand." If, therefore, you die in your sins, you must forever remain under the wrath and curse of God.

If, after you had entered eternity, and found yourself unprepared, you could retrace your steps, and get back again to this land of Gospel privileges, we might then hope that the experience of

your folly would teach you wisdom. But this is impossible. After death is the judgment. The surprise of unexpected death, is not one from which you can learn to be wise for the future. Often, unlooked for events may afford us instructive lessons,—and teach us wisdom for the time to come. It is true you will be undeceived by death, but as you die but once, it will be too late to profit by the knowledge which it imparts.

"Where, then, shall unbelievers be," asks the pious Flavel, "after their dissolution? In what state will they find themselves immediately after death hath closed their eyes? To be plucked out of house and body," he continues in his impressive style, "from among friends and comforts, and thrust into endless miseries, into the dark vaults of hell; never to see the light of this world any more; never to see a comfortable sight; never to hear a joyful sound; never to know

the meaning of rest, peace, or delight any more. O what a change is here! to exchange the smiles and honours of men, for the frowns and fury of God; to be clothed with flames, and drink the pure, unmixed wrath of God, who were but a few days since, clothed in silks, and filled with the sweets of this world! How is the state of things altered with them! It was the lamentable cry of poor Adrian, when he felt death approaching; 'O my poor, wandering soul! alas! whither art thou going! Where must thou lodge this night! thou shalt never jest more, never be merry more.'"

But a short space now remains to you for repentance. A few more revolving suns will number your days, and the places which now know you, will know you no more for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter." *Eccles.* xii. 13.

"Prepare to meet thy God." *Amos* iv. 12.

In conclusion, let me exhort you to yield to the influence of the motives which have now been mentioned. If you must soon die, improve the time which is still spared to you. It is more precious than silver or gold. When once gone, it can never be recalled. The very fact that death is marked with so much melancholly and sadness, is a loud and solemn call to prepare for it. It is designed to

awaken the mind to a sense of its importance, and of its constant and uninterrupted approach, which is the quick and steady march of a coming enemy. And it is designed to impress us with the horror of dying unprepared. Why else is it not a joyous and happy event? Let the mournfulness of the occasion have its due effect on your heart, by arousing it to a sense of its important and decisive character, and by leading you to make a genuine and speedy preparation. If you are now labouring under disease, do you flatter yourself with the hope of soon recovering? And does this hope drive from your mind the thought of death, and induce you to defer a preparation, at least, for the present? Who has authorized you to entertain such a hope? Has the misguided tenderness of friends, or the cruel policy of your physician, raised within your breast this cherished expectation? Physicians, who have been infi-

del in their sentiments, or scoffers at religion, have persuaded their patients, though known to be in the last stages of a fatal disease, that they were in no immediate danger, and would, in all likelihood, recover. The effect has been to dissipate all concern about death, and all serious thoughts of eternity; and the patient, with his hopes of recovery, thus bolstered up with falsehood and cruel mockery, has been fatally deceived, and at last, in awful surprise, sunk down to perdition. Deplorable is the situation of that patient, in whose case an infidel or scoffing physician takes occasion thus to manifest his hatred of sacred things, and his opposition to the ministers of Christ. Under the poor pretence that it disturbs the patient's mind, and aggravates his disease, such will forbid all conversation on religious subjects, while they will encourage levity, and a studied forgetfulness of his real situation, although he may

be just entering eternity. This is nothing less than trifling with an immortal, yet perishing soul, in order to indulge an unholy feeling. Such conduct can not be too much reprehended and abhorred. It sometimes happens, that such a physician will undo all that a clergyman and pious friends have been labouring to effect for a soul, just departing to the world of spirits. Piety in a physician is a great recommendation; though many, who are not pious, would shrink with abhorrence from such unfeeling and inhuman conduct, as has just been exposed. Be on your guard, therefore, when your physician, if he be of doubtful character, with respect to his religious sentiments, would flatter you with hopes of recovery, or appear anxious to divert your mind from religious meditation.

But suppose you do recover, will true piety be of any disadvantage to you in the world? Certainly not, if you are en-

gaged in any lawful pursuit. It has the promise of this life and that which is to come.

In regard to what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed, our Saviour says, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. vi. 33.

Should God, therefore, in mercy spare your life yet many days to come, it will be for your highest interest to prepare for death. You will then be prepared when death does come, let it be now, or at any future time. You will not then have this vast work to perform, when a fatal disease is wasting your strength. Besides, you are now, perhaps, more inclined to religious meditation and serious thoughtfulness, than you usually are. The subject of death and eternity has, perhaps, been brought very close to your heart; and you have experienced a de-

gree of solicitude hitherto unknown to you. The present may, therefore, be the most favourable time for making this preparation. By deferring it for the present, because you expect to recover, you may drive away the Spirit of God altogether; and you may never have another anxious or serious moment, till the soul is experiencing the agony of its separation from the body. God may, as a judgment, give you up to blindness of mind and hardness of heart. Let me exhort you now, while retired, alone, and quiet, to seek the favour of God. Now, while undisturbed by business, and anxious worldly cares, make your peace with God. You will then be prepared to go again in the world, and enter upon the duties of your vocation, with a conscience void of offence towards God and man, and with a readiness to meet death in the triumphant language, "O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory!" He

alone is prepared to live, who is prepared to die. And he only is prepared to die, who is prepared to live. Whether you live, therefore, or die with your present disease, PREPARE! so that whether living or dying, you may be the Lord's.

But, it is far from being certain that you will recover from your present indisposition. It may be certain that you will not. Of this, perhaps, you do not wish to be persuaded. You fear to be. And it may be, that you put out of view all those things which would serve to convince you. "Hence it happens," says the celebrated French divine, Bourdaloue, "that most men close their lives without really believing that they shall die, and almost a presumptuous assurance that they shall not. And those to whom there evidently remain but a few more days of life, are the very persons who labour the most for life. How many people are there, who, struck with a mortal

malady, and already given over by public opinion, form designs, engage in enterprises, and disquiet themselves with a thousand temporal affairs, as if they had the greatest concern in future worldly events? How many old men are there, who, borne down with a weight of years, and having but one step more to take to the grave, are as greedy after the things of the world, as if they were to possess them for ages?"

Hence it happens that many never know their real situation in this respect; not even when they are at the moment of death; and this because all those who come near them, are prepossessed with the idea, that they wish not to know it. Every one conspires to deceive them, at a time when it is most important to open their eyes. People assure them that every thing appears in their favour, when it is evident that every appearance is against them: they congratulate them

upon any slight alteration in their case seemingly for the better; and upon a change which may be favourable in appearance, but which is in reality, only the last effort of sinking nature; they industriously, and with great care, conceal from them all the marks and presages which are discovered in them, of certain death: they exaggerate to them the power and efficacy of medicines, without even speaking to them of the sovereign remedy, which is repentance. In this manner every one deceives them, and from what motives? From motives wholly worldly: a wife, from excess of tenderness; children, from respect or interest; strangers, from complaisance; domestics, from fear; so that they are always ignorant of the truth, and even when dying, are still sure that they shall not die.

Hence it happens that those, who, from their station, and from the peculiar duties of their profession, ought to undeceive

people in this respect, and to speak with less reserve, have so much difficulty to explain themselves.

They rely upon one another to do this; the physician upon the clergyman, who at this hour is called in, and the clergyman upon the physician; neither of them being willing to be the messenger of important, though painful and distressing tidings, which, however, God has commited to them to deliver; and thus they sacrifice to weak considerations, the salvation of a soul, whose eternal destiny depended, in some measure, upon their faithfulness.

Hence come so many precautions, so many disguises, so many evasions, in the last extremity, when it is thought necessary to press upon a sick man, an attention to prayer and religious duties, as a preparation for death. People tell him, that he need not yet despair, that though he is exhorted to those religious duties, it

is not because he is thought to be so dangerous, as to admit of no longer delay; but that it is good to be prepared in season that thus the mind may rest: and thus they take away from him one most powerful motive to repentance, and perhaps the only one capable of affecting him, namely, a near view of the judgment of God." Let me address a few words more directly.

1. To the AGED. Fathers! your silvery locks declare that the winter of age is coming rapidly upon you. But a few more sands remain to mark your days. Your declining sun has spent his strength, and hastens to the horizon, and the night of death is spreading around you its sable curtain. All nature seems to warn you, that the tolling bell will soon proclaim your departure to the world of spirits. But the solemn question, which all these evidences of approaching dissolution, would put to you,

is, *are you prepared to go?* If you are ready to depart and be with Christ, it is far better to go than to remain. I would rejoice with you, in the bright prospect which lies before you. Your warfare is almost consummated in complete and permanent victory. Your pilgrimage is almost ended, and you stand upon the borders of the happy, happy Canaan. But sad reverse, if you are still unreconciled to God! Trembling on the brink of the grave, yet unprepared to die! My soul weeps over your almost helpless condition. Perhaps you have spent forty, fifty, or sixty years in beginning to live, and have not yet commenced! How many plans of reformation have you formed and abandoned! How many resolutions to repent and turn to God, have you made and broken! How often have you been deceived by your own heart, and cheated out of the most solemn determinations! With all this array of melancholy, yet in-

structive exprience before your eyes, and with its monitory voice yet sounding in your ears, are you still deferring this momentous duty to a future day? If so, how amazingly small is the probability that you ever will be saved! Conversion in advanced life is extremely rare. Mr. Fenner tells us, says Flavel, of one Marcus Caius Victorius, a very aged man in the primitive times, who was converted from Heathenism to Christianity in his old age. This man come to Simplicianus, a minister, and told him that he heartily owned and embraced the Christian faith. But neither he nor the church would trust him for a long time; and the reason was, the unusualness of a conversion at such an age; but after he had given them good evidence of the reality of his professed change, there were acclamations and singing of Psalms, the people every where crying "Marcus Caius Victorious is become a Christian!"

2. To the YOUNG, let me say, "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." If you seek Him early, you shall surely find Him. It is generally the case that you are not disposed to think much of death and eternity. It is a gloomy and unwelcome subject to you; which is, on that account, put as far distant in the future as possible. It is thus you put far off the evil day. But young as you are, you are hastening to the grave. You are dying while you live. The graves of the young are daily multiplying. The next hour may hurry you into eternity. You once knew some who died younger than you are now. The great majority of the race die in the morning of life. The great probability, therefore, in regard to every one who is born into the world, is, that his course will be short, and will terminate before he arrives at maturity. You have no security that this will not be your case.

Do you love to think of pleasures, of vanity, and the world? These you may never realize; death you certainly must; and if you are now unprepared to meet it, you are neglecting, and permitting to pass by unimproved, the most precious and favoured season, for making that important and necessary preparation. In youth, you are most likely to be affected by serious considerations, and to yield to the drawings of the Holy Ghost. Your habits of sin are not so strong as they soon will be, and as they are daily becoming. The tie that now binds you to the friendship, the companionship, and influence of the world, is now more easily sundered than at any future period. The longer you are in the world, and the more familiar you become with its intercourse, the more powerfully are you swayed by its opinion and maxims. You are now in the bloom of life: and, comparatively speaking, you are untrammelled

with the business, and a stranger to the cares of more advanced life. The obstacles in the way of reconciliation with God, are now fewer and less formidable than they ever will be, and they are constantly increasing in number and aggravation. You are daily getting farther and farther from God and his kingdom, and rendering it less and less probable that you ever will be saved. Now is the time to strike a death blow at the enemy that is secretly ruining your soul, and imperceptibly dragging you down to perdition. Now is the time to break the fell enchantment that would lull you into the sleep of eternal death. Stir yourself up to lay hold on God. Arise and cry mightily unto God, through Jesus Christ.

3. Finally, let me exhort ALL OF EVERY AGE, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Prepare to meet thy God." "Be ye also ready."

"How foolish is it," says Dr. Bates,

"to neglect eternal things because they are future! Is it not a common complaint that life is short, that it flies away in a breath? And if death be so near, can eternity be so distant? Besides, do men want an understanding to foresee things to come? In their projects for this world, how quicksighted and provident are they, to discover all probable inconveniences afar off, and lay the scene to avoid them? And is reason only useful in the affairs of the body, and must sense, that cannot see a hand's breadth beyond the present, be the guide of the soul? Well, though the most powerful reasons, the most ardent exhortations, and stinging reprehensions can not prevail with the sons of earth now to be apprehensive of the evils that threaten them, but they live in a blind manner regardless of the soul, yet in a little while extremities will compel them to open their eyes. When they are departing hence, with

one foot upon the brink of time, and the other lifted up to enter eternity, how will they be astonished to see the distance between this world and the next, which seemed to them so wide, to be but one step? The present life, that in their imagination, would never end, and the future that would never begin, (so intent were they for the provision of the one, and neglectful of the other) behold the one is gone, and the other come. Time is at their back with all its vanities, and eternity before their faces, with its great realities. How are their thoughts and discourses changed in that hour that will decide their states for ever? How piercing and quick are their apprehensions then of heaven and hell, which before were neglected as unworthy of regard, or only touched the surface of their souls? What amazement! what dejection of spirit! to find themselves in a sad unpreparedness for their great account! The

remembrance, that for the poor advantages of time, they forfeited eternal glory, and ventured on eternal misery, cuts more sorely than the pangs of death. But suppose they harden their hearts to the last minute of life, and are more stupid than the beasts that tremble upon a precipice, at the sight of extreme danger, yet a minute after death, (O the heavy change!) when they shall feel themselves undone infinitely and irrecoverably, what fierce and violent workings will be in the mind? What a storm of passions raised? But then repentance will be perfect sorrow, without the profit. There can be no returns to the possibility of mercy." *Bates' Works*, vol. i. 102, 3.

As the subject before us is one of infinite importance, involving the highest and most enduring interests of the soul, we can not be too faithful in its treatment. There may be those who will consider intense anxiety in this par-

ticular, as out of place, and unnecessary, and who would be indisposed to press its importance upon the attention of an invalid, from motives of worldly and mistaken policy; but it is because they have no just conceptions of the value, nor of the danger of the soul.

And yet this unwise and ruinous exertion, to divert the mind from the view of approaching and inevitable death, sometimes wears the name of friendship. But it is a blind and heedless friendship, though it may be well meant. It is a friendship which does not regard the spiritual well-being of its object, but is confined to those possessions and comforts which he is leaving for ever. Your best worldly friend, may not be your most faithful spiritual counsellor. He may consult your present, temporal happiness, at the expense of your soul's salvation, and that too without designing to affect your more serious concerns.

Listen to the strong language of Bourdaloue on this subject: "We should endeavour to have a sincere and true friend," says this writer before quoted, "a friend who, without sparing us, without listening to the sentiments of a weak and interested friendship, will come to us when we are in danger, and say to us with the same zeal and energy which the prophet manifested, —Prepare to die, and that immediately, for death is not far distant. Let us require of him, as the kindest office which he can do to us, that he will not delay to explain himself, and that in explaining himself he will not be afraid of grieving us. Let us assure him, that by that we shall judge whether he is sincerely attached to us; that by that we shall distinguish him from false friends, and shall consider ourselves as under obligations to him for one of the most precious favours, which is a persuasion of the certainty of death, when we are drawing near to that period. This

is what we ought to wish from a friend. All other services without this, or which do not go thus far, are vain. But to attend to the salvation of a dying friend, to be anxious for his soul, and for his eternal state, to endeavour to prepare him, by wise counsel, to finish like a Christian, a life which will be followed by supreme happiness or supreme misery, this is to be a friend till death. Let us seek such a faithful friend. But where shall we find him? Not among men of the world. If they are at all friendly to each other, (and how very few are so?) it is according to the false spirit of the world; it is with regard to the frivolous interests of the world; it is to establish or advance a friend in the world. But we shall find him among the small number of virtuous and faithful servants of the Lord, whom he has reserved to himself, in the midst of a perverse world, and who are conspicuous for piety. Such friends are the more valuable, as after

having assisted us to live well, they then help us to die well."

It is the part of such a friend, dear, dying reader, that I have endeavoured now to act towards you. "My heart's desire, and prayer to God" for you, is that your soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Receive in kindness the reproof that has been administered, and the counsel that has been afforded. He, whose message it is you have now heard, has marked the spirit with which it has been received. I now leave you; but not alone. I leave you in the hands of God, and commend you to his grace. What has been said amiss, may He, in mercy forgive! And all that accords with his mind and will, may He own and bless. And to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, shall be praise and glory forever and ever. Amen.

A

SELECTION

OF

APPROPRIATE POETRY.

TIME.

Time speeds away—away—away:
Another hour—another day—
Another month—another year—
Drop from us like the leaflets sear;
Drop like the life-blood from our hearts;
The rose-bloom from the cheek departs,
The tresses from the temples fall,
The eye grows dim and strange to all.

Time speeds away—away—away:
Like torrent in a stormy day,
He undermines the stately tower,
Uproots the tree, and snaps the flower;
And sweeps from our distracted breast
The friends that loved—the friends that blessed:
And leaves us weeping on the shore,
To which they can return no more.

Time speeds away—away—away:
No eagle through the skies of day,
No wind along the hills can flee
So swiftly or so smooth as he.
Like fiery steed—from stage to stage
He bears us on—from youth to age;
Then plunge us in the fearful sea
Of fathomless Eternity.

Knox's Songs of Israel.

LIFE COMPARED TO THE SUN DIAL.

That solar shadow, as it measures life,
It life resembles too: life speeds away
From point to point, tho' seeming to stand still.
The cunning fugitive is swift by stealth:
Too subtle is the movement to be seen,
Yet soon man's hour is up, and we are gone.
Warnings point out our danger, gnomons, time:
As these are useless when the sun is set;
So those, but when more glorious reason shines.
Reason should judge in all; in reason's eye,
That sedentary shadow travels hard:
But all mankind mistake their time of day;
Even age itself: fresh hopes are hourly sown
In furrowed brows. So gentle life's descent,
We shut our eyes, and think it is a plain:

We take fair days in winter, for the spring:
We turn our blessings into bane; since oft
Man must compute that age he cannot feel:
He scarce believes he's older for his years.
Thus, at life's latest eve, we keep in store
One disappointment sure, to crown the rest;
The disappointment of a promised hour.

Young.

DEATH.

When frowning death appears,
And points his fatal dart,
What dark foreboding fears
Distract the sinner's heart!
The dreadful blow
No arm can stay,
But torn away
He sinks to wo.

Now every hope denied,
Bereft of every good,
He must the wrath abide
Of an avenging God:
No mercy there
Will greet his ear,
Nor wipe the tear
Of black despair.

Sinners, awake, attend,
And flee the wrath to come;
Make Christ, the Judge, your friend,
And heaven shall be your home.
His mercy nigh,
Now points the path
That leads from death
To joys on high. *Lee.*

THE TOMB.

Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb,
Take this new treasure to thy trust;
And give these sacred relics room,
To seek a slumber in the dust.

Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear
Invade thy bounds. No mortal woes
Can reach the peaceful sleeper here,
While angels watch the soft repose.

So Jesus slept;—God's dying Son
Pass'd thro' the grave, and blest the bed;
Rest here, blest saint, till from his throne
The morning break, and pierce the shade.

Break from his throne illustrious morn;
Attend, O earth! his sov'reign word;
Restore thy trust—a glorious form—
Call'd to ascend and meet the Lord. *Watts.*

DEATH OF A YOUNG PERSON.

When blooming youth is snatch'd away
By death's resistless hand,
Our hearts the mournful tribute pay,
Which pity must demand.

While pity prompts the rising sigh,
Oh, may this truth, imprest
With awful pow'r—"I too must die"—
Sink deep in ev'ry breast.

The voice of this alarming scene
May ev'ry heart obey;
Nor be the heav'nly warning vain,
Which calls to watch, and pray.

Oh, let us fly, to Jesus fly,
Whose pow'rful arm can save;
Then shall our hopes ascend on high,
And triumph o'er the grave. *Watts.*

SICKNESS AND DEATH.

My soul, the minutes haste away,
Apace comes on the final day,
When in the icy arms of death,
I must give up my vital breath.

When all the springs of life are low,
The spirits faint, the pulses slow;

The eyes grow dim, and short the breath,
Presages of approaching death.

When all eternity's in sight,
The brightest day or blackest night;
When death shall break the building down,
And let thee into worlds unknown.

O come my soul, the matter weigh!
How wilt thou leave thy kindred clay;
And how the unknown region try,
And launch into eternity.

Cleanse me, O God, with blood divine,
Renew my heart, and make me thine;
That when th' important hour shall come,
My soul shall triumph o'er the tomb.

Then shall I bid the world adieu,
Nor fear what ghastly death can do;
But calmly lean on Jesu's breast,
And sweetly close my eyes to rest.

Brown, (altered.)

SUPPORT IN DEATH.

When bending o'er the brink of life,
My trembling soul shall stand;
Waiting to pass death's awful flood,
Great God, at thy command;

When weeping friends surround my bed,
And close my sightless eyes;
When laden with the weight of years,
This broken body lies:

When every long-loved scene of life,
Stands ready to depart;
When the last sigh that shakes the frame,
Shall rend this bursting heart:

O thou great Source of joy supreme,
Whose arm alone can save,
Dispel the darkness that surrounds
The entrance to the grave!

Lay thy supporting, gentle hand,
Beneath my sinking head;
And let a beam of love divine,
Illume my dying bed.

Leaning on thy dear faithful breast,
May I resign my breath;
And in thy soft embraces lose
"The bitterness of death!"

ON DEATH.

Lord, I confess thy sentence just
That sinful man must turn to dust;

That I ere long should yield my breath,
The captive of all-conquering death.

Soon will the awful hour appear,
When I must quit my dwelling here:
These active limbs, to worms a prey,
In the cold grave must waste away;
Nor shall I share in all that's done,
In this wide world, beneath the sun.

To distant climes, and seats unknown,
My naked spirit must be gone;
To God its Maker, must return,
And ever joy, or ever mourn.

No room for penitence and prayer,
No further preparation there
Can e'er be made; the thought is vain;
My state unaltered must remain.

Awake, my soul, without delay;
That if God summons thee this day,
Thou cheerful at his call mayst rise,
And spring to life beyond the skies.

Doddridge.

DEATH AND JUDGMENT APPOINTED TO ALL.

Heaven has confirmed the great decree,
That Adam's race must die:

One general ruin sweeps them down,
And low in dust they lie.

Ye living men, the tomb survey,
Where you must quickly dwell;
Hark how the awful summons sounds
In every funeral knell!

Once you must die, and once for all;
The solemn purport weigh;
For know that heaven and hell are hung
On that important day.

Those eyes, so long in darkness veiled,
Must wake the Judge to see,
And every word, and every thought
Must pass his scrutiny.

O may I in the judge behold
My Saviour and my friend,
And far beyond the reach of death
With all his saints ascend. *Doddridge.*

VANITY OF THE WORLD.

To-morrow, Lord, is thine,
Lodged in thy sovereign hand:
And if its sun arise and shine,
It shines by thy command.

The present moment flies,
And bears our life away;
O make thy servants truly wise,
That they may live to-day.

Since on this winged hour
Eternity is hung,
Waken by thine almighty power
The aged and the young.

One thing demands our care;
O be it still pursued!
Lest, slighted once, the season fair
Should never be renewed.

To Jesus may we fly
Swift as the morning light,
Lest life's young golden beams should die
In sudden endless night. *Doddridge.*

MISIMPROVED PRIVILEGES.

Alas, how fast our moments fly!
How short our months appear!
How swift through various seasons hastes
The still revolving year.

Seasons of grace, and days of hope,
While Jesus waiting stands,

And spreads the blessings of his love
With wide-extended hands.

But O how slow our stupid souls
These blessings to secure!
Blessings, which through eternal years
Unwithering shall endure.

Beneath the word of life we die;
We starve amidst our store:
And what salvation should impart
Heightens our ruin more.

Pity this madness, God of love,
And make us truly wise:
So from the pregnant seeds of grace
Shall glorious harvests rise. *Doddridge.*

DELAY NOT REPENTANCE.

Great Sovereign of the human heart,
Thy mighty energy impart,
Which darts at once through breasts of steel,
And makes the nether millstone* feel.

* The hardest hearts. Job xli. 24.

Let sinners tremble at thy word,
Struck by the terror of the Lord;
And, while they tremble let them flee,
And seek their help, their life, from thee.

O let them seize the present day,
Nor risk salvation by delay;
To-morrow, Lord, to thee belongs;
This night may vindicate thy wrongs.

This night may stop their fleeting breath,
And seal them to eternal death,
May veil redemption from their sight,
And give them flames instead of light.

Or should succeeding years remain,
Years, with their sabbaths, all in vain
Before their darkened eyes may roll,
And more obdurate leave the soul.

Great Saviour, let thy pity rise,
And make the wretched trifiers wise;
Lest pangs and tremblings felt in vain,
Hasten and feed immortal pain.

THE WISDOM OF REDEEMING TIME.

God of eternity, from thee
Did infant Time his being draw;

Moments and days, and months and years,
Revolve by thy unvaried law.

Silent and slow they glide away;
Steady and strong the current flows,
Lost in eternity's wild sea,
The boundless gulf from whence it rose.

With it the thoughtless sons of men
Before the rapid streams are borne
On to that everlasting home,
Where not one soul can e'er return.

Yet while the shore on either side
Presents a gaudy flattering show,
We gaze, in fond amusement lost,
Nor think to what a world we go.

Great source of wisdom, teach my heart
To know the price of every hour,
That time may bear me on to joys
Beyond its measure and its power. *Doddridge.*

PREPARE TO MEET DEATH.

SINNER, art thou still secure?
Wilt thou still refuse to pray?
Can thy heart or hands endure
In the Lord's avenging day?

See, his mighty arm is bar'd!
Awful terrors clothe his brow!
For his judgment stand prepar'd
Thou must either break or bow.

At his presence nature shakes,
Earth affrighted hastes to flee,
Solid mountains melt like wax;
What will then become of thee?
Who his advent may abide?
You that glory in your shame,
Will you find a place to hide
When the world is wrapt in flame?

Then the rich, the great, the wise,
Trembling, guilty, self-condemn'd,
Must behold the wrathful eyes
Of the Judge they once blasphem'd:
Where are now their haughty looks?
Oh their horror and despair!
When they see the open'd books,
And their dreadful sentence hear!

Lord, prepare us by thy grace!
Soon we must resign our breath;
And our souls be call'd to pass
Through the iron gate of death;

Let us now our day improve,
Listen to the gospel-voice;
Seek the things that are above,
Scorn the world's pretended joys.

Oh! when flesh and heart shall fail,
Let thy love our spirits cheer;
Strengthen'd thus, we shall prevail
Over Satan, sin, and fear:
Trusting in thy precious name,
May we thus our journey end;
Then our foes shall lose their aim,
And the Judge will be our friend.

Newton.

THE TOLLING BELL.

Oft as the bell, with solemn toll,
Speaks the departure of a soul,
Let each one ask himself "Am I
Prepar'd should I be call'd to die?"

Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death:
Soon as it fails, at once I'm gone,
And plung'd into a world unknown.

Then leaving all I lov'd below,
To God's tribunal I must go;

Must hear the Judge pronounce my fate,
And fix my everlasting state.

But could I bear to hear him say,
"Depart accursed, far away!
With Satan in the lowest hell,
Thou art for ever doom'd to dwell."

Lord Jesus! help me now to flee,
And seek my hope alone in thee;
Apply thy blood, thy Spirit give,
Subdue my sin, and let me live.

Then, when the solemn bell I hear,
If sav'd from guilt, I need not fear;
Nor would the thought distressing be,
Perhaps it next may toll for me.

Rather my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish to hear thy voice,
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heaven, if thou art mine.

Newton.

EARTHLY PROSPECTS DECEITFUL.

Oft in vain the voice of truth
Solemnly and loudly warns;

Thoughtless, inexperienc'd youth,
Though it hears, the warning scorns.
Youth in fancy's glass surveys
Life prolong'd to distant years,
While the vast imagin'd space
Fill'd with sweets and joys appears.

Awful disappointment soon
Overclouds the prospect gay;
Some their sun goes down at noon,
Torn by death's strong hand away:
Where are then their pleasing schemes?
Where the joys they hope to find?
Gone for ever, like their dreams,
Leaving not a trace behind.

Others, who are spar'd awhile,
Live to weep o'er fancy's cheat;
Find distress, and pain, and toil,
Bitter things instead of sweet:
Sin has spread a curse around,
Poison'd all things here below;
On this base polluted ground,
Peace and joy can never grow.

Grace alone can cure our ills,
Sweeten life with all its cares;
Regulate our stubborn wills,
Save us from surrounding snares.

Though you oft have heard in vain,
Former years in folly spent,
Grace invites you yet again,
Once more calls you to repent.

Call'd again, at length, beware,
Hear the Saviour's voice, and live;
Lest he in his wrath should swear,
He no more will warning give.
Pray that you may hear and feel,
Ere the day of grace be past;
Lest your hearts grow hard as steel,
Or this year should prove your last.

Newton.

BOAST NOT OF TO-MORROW.

PROSTRATE before thy throne I fall,
My God, my hope, my trust;
O let me live to thee to-day,
Nor of to-morrow boast.

Time! O how swift its moments fly!
What millions have I lost!
O may I seize the golden NOW!
Nor of to-morrow boast.

Before the present day is past,
My soul may meet its doom;

Now let me for salvation haste,
To-morrow ne'er may come.

To-day may I the Saviour know,
And in his name believe;
Nor let those precious moments go,
To-morrow may deceive.

Thy sparing mercies still abound,
And I am out of hell;
To-day I am on mercy's ground,
To-morrow—who can tell?

Grant, gracious Lord! at last I may
Before thy face appear;
And sing an everlasting day,
There's no to-morrow there. *Hoskins*

CONVERSE WITH DEATH.

Stoop down, my thoughts, that used to rise,
Converse a while with death;
Think how a gasping mortal lies
And pants away his breath.

But, O the soul that never dies!
At once it leaves the clay!
Ye thoughts, pursue it where it flies,
And track its wondrous way.

Up to the courts where angels dwell,
  It mounts, triumphing there:
Or devils plunge it down to hell,
  In infinite despair.

And must my body faint and die?
  And must this soul remove?
Oh, for some guardian angel nigh,
  To bear it safe above!

Jesus, to thy dear faithful hand
  My naked soul I trust;
And my flesh waits for thy command,
  To drop into my dust. *Watts.*

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAYS.

I would not live alway: I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way;
The few lurid mornings that dawn on us here,
Are enough for life's woes, full enough for its cheer.

I would not live alway, thus fetter'd by sin;
Temptation without, and corruption within:
E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears.

I would not live alway; no—welcome the tomb,
Since Jesus has laid there, I dread not its gloom;

There, sweet be my rest, till he bid me arise
To hail him in triumph descending the skies.

Who, who would live always away from his God;
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns:

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren, transported to greet;
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul!

Heber.

Why should we start, and fear to die?
What timorous worms we mortals are!
Death is the gate of endless joy,
And yet we dread to enter there.

The pains, the groans, and dying strife,
Fright our approaching souls away;
Still we shrink back again to life,
Fond of our prison and our clay.

O! if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste,

Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed.

Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.

Watts.

A SIGHT OF HEAVEN IN SICKNESS.

Oft have I sat in secret sighs,
To feel my flesh decay,
Then groan'd aloud with frighted eyes,
To view the tottering clay.

But I forbid my sorrows now,
Nor dares the flesh complain;
Diseases bring their profits too;
The joy o'ercomes the pain.

My cheerful soul now all the day
Sits waiting here and sings;
Looks through the ruins of her clay,
And practises her wings.

Faith almost changes into sight,
While from afar she spies

Her fair inheritance in light,
  Above created skies.

Had but the prison walls been strong,
  And firm without a flaw,
In darkness she had dwelt too long,
  And less of glory saw.

But now the everlasting hills
  Through every chink appear,
And something of the joy she feels,
  While she's a prisoner here.

The beams of heaven rush sweetly in
  At all the gaping flaws;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
  And native air she draws.

O may these walls stand tottering still,
  The breaches never close,
If I must here in darkness dwell,
  And all this glory lose!

Or rather let this flesh decay,
  The ruins wider grow,
Till, glad to see th' enlarged way,
  I stretch my pinions through.

MORTALITY.

So the multitude goes—like the flower and the weed
That wither away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes—even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that hath often been told.

For we are the same things that our fathers have been,
We see the same sights that our fathers have seen,
We drink the same stream, and we feel the same sun,
And we run the same course that our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think,
From the death we are shrinking from, they too would shrink,
To the life we are clinging to, they too would cling—
But it speeds from the earth like a bird on the wing.

They loved—but their story we cannot unfold;
They scorned—but the heart of the haughty is cold,
They grieved—but no wail from their slumbers may come,
They joyed—but the voice of their gladness is dumb.

They died—ay, they died! and we things that are now,
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
Who make in their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the changes they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea, hope and despondence, and pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together like sunshine and rain;

And the smile and the tear and the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
O why should the spirit of mortal be proud! *Knox.*

TIME IS SHORT.

THE time is short! the season near,
When death will us remove
To leave our friends, however dear,
And all we fondly love.

The time is short! sinners, beware,
Nor trifle time away;
The word of great salvation hear,
While it is call'd to-day.

The time is short! ye rebels, now
To Christ the Lord submit;
To mercy's golden sceptre bow,
And fall at Jesus' feet.

The time is short! ye saints rejoice—
The Lord will quickly come:
Soon shall you hear the Bridegroom's voice,
To call you to your home.

The time is short! it swiftly flies—
The hour is just at hand,
When we shall mount above the skies,
And reach the wish'd for land.

The time is short!—the moment near,
When we shall dwell above;
And be forever happy there,
With Jesus, whom we love. *Hoskins.*

DEATH UNCERTAIN.

Come, O my soul, look up and see
How swift the moments run!
Swift as the wheel of time whirls round
My closing day brings on.

Some busy hand perhaps this hour
Is weaving fast my shroud;—
Soon hoary winter will draw on,
And freeze life's vital flood.

Few clocks, for aught I know, may strike
Before my fun'ral knell,
Which by its doleful sounding tongue,
Shall my departure tell.

When the grim king of terrors calls
May I triumphant stand;

And find my Saviour then my friend
To guide me with his hand.

Then shall my spirit soar away
To heav'n, and see his face;
And sing with all the ransom'd throng
The wonders of his grace!

PANTING FOR HEAVEN.

Ye angels who stand round the throne,
And view my Immanuel's face,
In rapturous songs make him known;
Tune, tune your soft harps to his praise:
He formed you the spirits you are,
So happy, so noble, so good;
While others sunk down in despair,
Confirmed by his power, ye stood.

Ye saints, who stand nearer than they,
And cast your bright crowns at his feet,
His grace and his glory display,
And all his rich mercy repeat:
He snatched you from hell and the grave,
He ransomed from death and despair;
For you he was mighty to save,
Almighty to bring you safe there.

O, when will the period appear,
  When I shall unite in your song?
I'm weary of lingering here,
  And I to your Saviour belong!
I'm fettered and chained up in clay;
  I struggle and pant to be free;
I long to be soaring away,
  My God and my Saviour to see.

I want to put on my attire,
  Washed white in the blood of the Lamb;
I want to be one of your choir.
  And tune my sweet harp to his name:
I want—oh I want to be there,
  Where sorrow and sin bid adieu,
Your joy and your friendship to share.
  To wonder and worship with you. *De Fluery.*

SUPPORT IN DEATH.

Behold the gloomy vale,
  Which thou, my soul, must tread,
Beset with terrors fierce and pale,
  That leads thee to the dead.

Ye pleasing scenes, adieu,
  Which I so long have known:
My friends, a long farewell to you,
  For I must pass alone.

And thou, beloved clay,
  Long partner of my cares,
In this rough part art torn away
  With agony and tears.

But see, a ray of light,
  With splendours all divine,
Breaks through these doleful realms of night,
  And makes its horrors shine.

Where death and darkness reigns,
  Jehovah is my stay:
His rod my trembling feet sustains,
  His staff defends my way.

Dear Shepherd, lead me on;
  My soul disdains to fear;
Death's gloomy phantoms all are flown,
  Now life's great Lord is near. *Doddridge.*

DAY OF DEATH.

The day approacheth, O my soul,
  The great decisive day,
Which from the verge of mortal life
  Shall bear thee far away.

Another day more awful dawns;
  And lo, the Judge appears:

Ye heavens, retire before his face,
And sink, ye darkened stars.

Yet does one short preparing hour,
One precious hour, remain;
Rouse thee, my soul, with all thy power,
Nor let it pass in vain.

With me my brethren soon must die,
And at that bar appear;
Now by our intercourse improved
To mutual comfort here.

For this, thy temple, Lord, we throng;
For this thy board surround;
Here may our service be approved,
And in thy presence crowned.

Doddridge.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Prepare me, gracious God!
To stand before thy face:
Thy Spirit must the work perform,
For it is all of grace.

'I can't prepare my heart
Eternal life to gain;
'Tis thou must all the strength impart,
Or all I do, is vain.

'I can't one sin atone,
I swell with pride no more:
All the best duties I have done,
I've reason to deplore.'

In Christ's obedience clothe,
And wash me in his blood:
So shall I lift my head with joy,
Among the sons of God.

Do thou my sin subdue,
Thy sov'reign love make known;
The spirit of my mind renew,
And save me in thy Son.

Let me attest thy pow'r,
Let me thy goodness prove,
Till my full soul can hold no more
Of everlasting love. *Elliot.*

HEAVEN.

The golden palace of my God
Tow'ring above the clouds I see:
Beyond the cherub's bright abode,
Higher than angels' thoughts can be.
How can I in those courts appear
Without a wedding garment on?

Conduct me, Thou life-giver, there,
Conduct me to Thy glorious throne!
And clothe me with thy robes of light,
And lead me through sin's darksome night,
My Saviour and my God!

Russian Poetry.

ETERNITY.

Eternity is just at hand!—
And shall I waste my ebbing sand;
And careless view departing day,
And throw my inch of time away?

But an eternity there is
Of endless wo, or endless bliss;
And swift as time fulfils its round,
We to eternity are bound.

What countless millions of mankind
Have left this fleeting world behind!
They're gone! but where?—ah, pause and see,
Gone to a long eternity.

Sinner! canst thou forever dwell
In all the fiery deeps of hell;
And is death nothing, then to thee;
Death, and a dread eternity?

THE END.

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